

4-6-1990

## News & Views - Vol. 08, No. 10 - April 6, 1990

University of Massachusetts Boston

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### Recommended Citation

University of Massachusetts Boston, "News & Views - Vol. 08, No. 10 - April 6, 1990" (1990). *1983-1991, News & Views*. Paper 104.  
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# UMASS BOSTON NEWS & VIEWS

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 10

APRIL 6, 1990

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

## "All I could hear was the kid screaming for help" *Officers Ahern and Ward to the Rescue*



*Dry and mighty: UMass/Boston heroes Robert Ward (left) and Jeremiah Ahern add the Dorchester Bay case to the files.*

*"And ever the fitful gusts between/  
A sound came from the land;/It  
was the sound of the trampling  
surf./On the rocks and the hard  
sea-sand."*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

In a daring St Patrick's Day rescue at sea, reminiscent of the tales of Edgar Rowe Snow, Jeremiah Ahern and Robert Ward saved the lives of four men and a boy tossed into the icy waters of Dorchester Bay after their 23-foot boat capsized. What began as a fishing trip for John Adamic and his six-year-old son Anthony Crawford, Luiz Perez, Luis Soto, Kevin O'Brien, and Ronald O'Brien ended in tragedy averted, thanks to the quick-thinking and bravery of the two veteran UMass/Boston public safety officers.

Officer Ahern was first on the scene, near the JFK Library, where barely coherent John Adamic, drenched and freezing, had managed to swim to shore. After hearing "frantic screams," Officer Ahern fetched a spare tire from his cruiser to use as a float. Leaving only his gun belt behind, he then plunged into the frigid waters and had almost made his way to 16-year-old Luiz Perez, when the current and tides wrested the lad from his grasp.

By this time, Officer Ward had arrived; he, too, made use of a tire as a flotation device, and, in so doing, was able to reach young Perez. "I just grabbed him and held him up," Officer Ward recalls, "He was in bad shape." Several minutes elapsed before the three were pulled from the

water by the crew of a Boston Police boat.

As the boat sped to Kelly's Landing, where a team of emergency medical personnel was standing by, the officers spotted the four remaining victims. Two of them, including the six-year-old, were clinging to the overturned hull of the rapidly sinking boat. All six, as well as Officers Ward and Ahern, were treated at local hospitals and released.

Another important figure in this story of heroism is Officer Michael Brady, who as dispatcher, ensured that rescue boats from the Boston and MDC police and the Coast Guard were able to reach the scene quickly.

Although Officer Ward says modestly, "You just do what you have to do," and Officer Ahern

confesses, "I had all sorts of things running through my mind," Acting Captain Philip O'Donnell sees their heroism differently: "I've never been prouder of anyone in the department than I am of these two guys," says Captain O'Donnell, who nominated them for commendations of valor, the highest award given members of the force. Officers Ward and Ahern received their commendations at the April meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Chancellor Sherry Penney agrees, "The bravery of Jerry Ahern and Bob Ward does not surprise me; it affirms what we all know to be true about the dedicated officers who ensure the safety of our Campus. I admire their selflessness and respect their professionalism."



# Honorary Degrees awarded

*Doctor of Fine Arts to Elma I. Lewis,  
Artistic Director, National Center  
of Afro-American Artists*



*Dr. Elma Lewis smiles as Prof. Dianthe Myers-Spencer, Music Department, helps her prepare to accept her honorary Doctor of Fine Arts.*

*"I sailed west to reach east and had to round off the earth as I went/The hair from my head thinned and gold was laid across three continents"*

—Nikki Giovanni

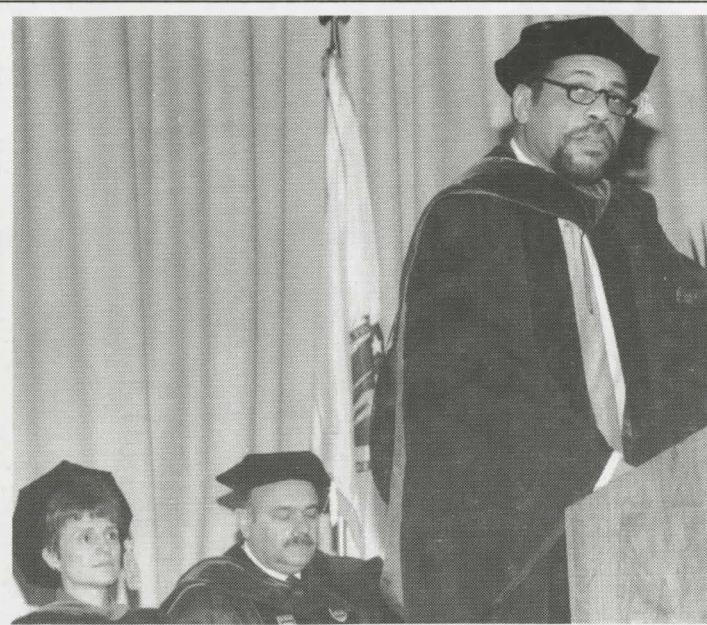
Text of the citation, read by Chancellor Penney, awarding the honorary Doctor of Fine Arts to Elma Lewis:

*We honor you today for your lifetime dedication to the arts, to the citizens of Boston, and especially, to making the world aware of extraordinary talent waiting to be seen and heard in the black youth of our city. Teacher, performer, artistic director, you have established in Boston the National Center of Afro-American Artists and in so doing have changed the lives of the many thousands of students who have drawn inspiration from your vision and who have accepted your challenge to discover the rich variety of their own artistic heritage and traditions. Opera, jazz, dance, and drama: you have set before countless delighted audi-*

*ences the panoply of performing arts. Our culture is fuller, our sensibilities heightened because you have taught us all new ways of thinking, and feeling, about the artist that is inside each and everyone of us.*

*Elma Lewis, today we add yet another honor to the long list that recognizes your contributions to Boston, to Afro-American culture, and to performing arts. You are a fellow of the MacArthur Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Black Academy of Arts and Letters. Among your many citations are those from the President, the Governor, the City of Boston, the National Black Arts Festival, and the NAACP. The Doctor of Fine Arts the University of Massachusetts at Boston bestows upon you today will bring to 23 the number of honorary degrees that reflect the esteem with which your colleagues in the academy hold your work and your life of commitment to a vision of a world made better by music, dance, letters, and performance.*

*Doctor of Laws to Arnold L. Mitchem,  
Executive Director, National Council of  
Educational Opportunity Associations*



*Chancellor Penney and Provost Zompa listen intently as Dr. Arnold Mitchem accepts his honorary Doctor of Laws degree.*

*"It's not easy to know what is true for you or me...As I learn from you,I guess you learn from me"*

—Langston Hughes

Text of the citation, read by Chancellor Penney, awarding the Doctor of Laws degree to Arnold L. Mitchem:

*We honor you today on behalf of those individuals for whom you have made the dream of a university education a reality. As Executive Director of the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations in Washington, you have made certain that presidents, senators, and congressman are aware that low income, minority, handicapped, first-generation and other disadvantaged students must be brought into our nation's system of higher education. For over 15 years you have dedicated your professional life to defining "educational access" and to making that definition part of the academy's vocabulary. You have given the franchise of science and letters to young men and women who otherwise would*

*have found the doors to higher learning locked—fettered by tradition, by prejudice, by apathy. You have milled the master key and unlocked the doors of opportunity for over 400,000 students annually.*

*Arnold Mitchem, you have brought together students, faculty, and service professionals in a coordinated effort to ensure that every American wishing to pursue a college education has rights of access and choice to our nation's campuses. You have also toiled to make certain that on those campuses are the support services that help turn "disadvantaged students" into productive graduates who give back to society far more than they may have taken. We bestow upon you a doctor of laws degree in recognition of that which you have achieved and in recognition of the example you have set for handicapped and minority students.*



# Earth Day Extravaganza

*Mark April 21 a green-letter day on your calendar*

*"The rounded heights of Dorchester were radiant with the rays of the luminary that had just sunk behind their crest, and streaks of paler light were playing along the waters, and gilding the green summits of the islands which clustered across the mouth of the estuary."*

—James Fenimore Cooper

Thanks to the year-long efforts of Urban Harbors Institute Director Richard Delaney, his Assistant Madeleine Walsh, and many other members of the UMass/Boston community, the celebration for the 20th anniversary of Earth Day promises to be an occasion guaranteed to reaffirm and reawaken commitment to the preservation of the environment.

The events planned for Saturday, April 21 from 9:15 AM through 4:00 PM at the Harbor Campus range from a Farmer's Market that will feature grown-in-Massachusetts products to tours of the two-masted schooner *Ernestina* to reggae music by Singers Against a Fearful Environment to a visit from a thirteen-member delegation of Soviet scientists. The festivities will launch what Rich Delaney hopes will be "a decade of environmental activism." Activism can be undertaken on a

grand scale, but it also can be manifested in smaller, more personal ways: another highlight of the April 21 festival will be the product displays by manufacturers of environmentally sound products, who will distribute free samples of their wares. Add to all of this tours to Thompson's Island and trips around the Harbor on *Enviro-Lab*, and you begin to get a sense of the myriad activities that will take place on the penultimate Saturday in April.

But there's more: Senator John Kerry will be on hand to talk about a national commitment to preserving and protecting the environment. Professor John Farrington has organized a companion lecture series in celebration of Earth Day, "Environmental Issues," that will begin on April 5 and run through May 11. The Geography and Earth Sciences Department, under the coordination of Professor David Nellis, has

prepared a display on lead paint and its dangers. Even the Boston Bar Association is getting into the act—with a series of skits and dramatic readings about the legal issues relevant to environmentalism. If lawyers in costume aren't enough to command your attention, then consider that all of the neighborhood recycling groups in the City of Boston will be on-hand recycling in the parking lot adjacent to the receiving dock.

April 21, 1990 is day that will draw members of the UMass/Boston community, their families and friends, as well as members of UMass/

Boston's neighboring communities and the City at large to the Harbor Campus. Hard work and careful planning have ensured that the day will be memorable. Chancellor Penney has served as the honorary chairperson of Earth Day 1990's Board of Advisors; joining her on the Board are State Representative James T. Brett, Senate President William M.

Bulger, Boston School Committee President Daniel Burke, Boston City Councillor James E. Byrne, Secretary of Environmental Affairs John P. DeVillars, Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, Senator John Kerry, Elma Lewis, Artistic Director, National Center of Afro-American Artists, Maurice Lewis, Public Affairs Director, WBCN, Congressman John Joseph Moakley, and 13 other luminaries. Faculty, staff,

and students have contributed time, ideas, and sweat equity into preparations for the day. The generous support of volunteers, corporate donors and other contributors has funded the celebration.

If you would like more information about Earth Day, or the ancillary events such as the April 20 concert by Odetta and Bill Staines, call the Urban Harbors Institute at 7-5570. For more information about the "Environmental Issues" lecture series, call the Environmental Sciences Program, 7-7440 or the Biology Department, 7-6600. For more information about "Earth Day 1990: The Science Behind the Issues," an April 20 forum of eminent scientists, newspaper and television journalists jointly sponsored by UMB and the American Chemical Society, call (508) 372-7161, extension 311.



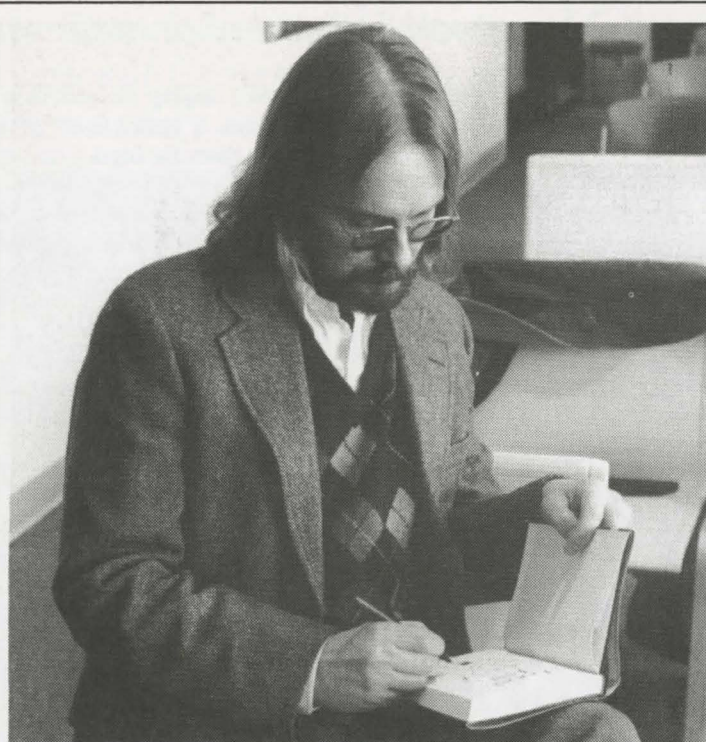


# Wayne Wilson: A Special Profile

Wayne Wilson says he doesn't spend much time eavesdropping, but if you've read *Loose Jam*, you have to wonder if he's telling the truth. One of the many strengths of this first novel is its exquisitely transcribed dialogue. Wilson plainly has an ear for what he calls the "music of the American language," and what he achieves in *Loose Jam* is a dead-on accurate rendering of the way Americans talk and what they say. No false notes, no ragged passages.

Wayne Wilson enrolled in UMass/Boston as a transfer student in 1987, and will graduate with a BA in English this June. When he does, he'll join the long list of writers who have graduated from our English Department, among them Jeffrey Schwartz (poet), Deborah Bruce (poet), Helene Davis (poet), James Haug (poet; NEA recipient), Susan Kelly (novelist; Edgar nominee), George O'Har (novelist), Sharon Singer Salinger (novelist), Maris Nicols (short story writer; *Mademoiselle* fiction award winner), and three playwrights whose plays have been produced by the New Ehrlich Theater—Elizabeth Quillan, Charles Anastas, and Jesse Mavro (also a faculty member.) Not too shabby for a department that's only 25 years old.

*Loose Jam* has so far been reviewed in the *NY Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Phoenix* and *California* magazine. Although Wilson does not consider it a "Viet Nam novel," certainly readers come away from the book with a richer understanding of how the war continues to shadow both its soldiers and its sunshine patriots. *Loose Jam* chronicles what happens to aging veteran Henry Brown when Miles Duckworth, a friend from the past (childhood-past and Viet Nam-past) shows up and disrupts Henry's gentle slide into the good night of middle age. Readers meet up with the kind of minor characters they expect to populate a novel set in 1980's California—a chiropractor whose leisurewear consists of "a NO NUKES T-shirt and a rainbow striped Guatemalan skull cap"; a



Author Wilson inscribes a volume at his Harbor Campus reading.

"suntanned birdbrain" whose most pressing thoughts consist of securing the return of a borrowed pen—and the kind major characters that often frequent the pages of first novels—a searching and introspective protagonist; a trickster friend from the past; a wary-but-strong love interest. They're

all there and they're all well crafted.

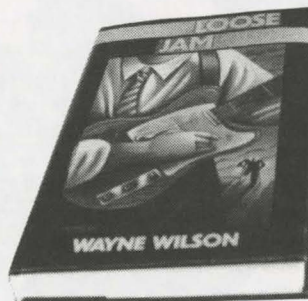
What makes *Loose Jam* compelling, however, is not its characters, its plot, its Viet Nam flashbacks, or even its surrealistic violence; rather, it's Wilson's use of language and sly juxtaposition of details. The novel begins, "when

Henry saw the one-legged man coming up the dirt road from the highway his thoughts scattered like startled birds," and the promise of poetry that opening sentence sets up is delivered throughout the text. There's a sharpness and a clarity to the prose, moreover, that prompts readers to forgive and, ultimately, forget, the occasional excess. Readers get drawn quickly into Henry's world, perhaps because they feel a shock of recognition—here's a character who orders tofu when lunching with his yuppie boss, but who also stands in front of his open refrigerator wolfing cold pizza when he's sure no one's looking. There is a bleak symmetry to *Loose Jam*; parallel relationships, parallel journeys, parallel fates—what Henry calls "the Irony of Doom." It is a remarkable novel.

No less remarkable, however, than its author, whom a former professor calls, "one of the finest students I've taught anywhere, anytime in my long career here and at other distinguished universities." Wilson returns the complement with words of high praise for English Department faculty, who have been, he says, both inspirations and models.

## Excerpt from Wayne Wilson's *Loose Jam*

*That was how you got really strange: coming home to a dark house every night, eating alone, sleeping alone—the whole stupid routine. Pissing away the evenings with pipe dreams and planning every weekend of the year in advance so there would be no time to brood over all the bleak corners of your life. Defending your heart while your skin withered from lack of a woman's touch. And before you knew it you'd forgotten that you were every lonely in the first place; you grew accustomed to spending Friday nights stretched out on the couch, dipping shepherd's bread in olive oil and plunking along with B.*



*B. King Live at the Regal until you fell asleep among the damp crumbs with the lights still burning.*

*It was Miles who had started him on this melancholy train of thought, Miles and that Policy Man nonsense. Now all of Henry's carefully developed no-*

*tions of balance and reason were suddenly beginning to appear awfully threadbare. And Henry like those notions, he'd come to depend on them; awakening in a cold sweat during the dark hours, he'd fumble for them like a nearsighted man grabbing for his glasses, certain that he was about to tumble right off the world into the black indifference, certain that not a soul would miss him.*

—Used with permission of the author.

*Loose Jam*, 263 pages (Dela-corte Press, 1990), \$17.95. Available at the UMass/Boston Bookstore.